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EXPLORING THE ETHICS OF WOMEN IN COMBAT

by

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Abstract

Women in the military have come a long way. Women's roles in military combat should continue to grow. Other countries adapted their policies to allow women throughout their services. Should the United States follow? First, they will need to answer many questions.

Critics discuss many pros and cons. Some claim physical issues regarding strength and endurance. Specialty qualifications for both men and women eliminate these problems. Others argue that menstruation and pregnancy are a burden. However, this paper will show that those are not true. Some argue that unit cohesion will be a factor, especially when sexual thoughts start to run rampant. As the military accepts women into combat roles, a more cohesive team will develop. With equal rights more important than ever, the military should make every effort to ensure women have an equal opportunity to serve in all positions at all ranks if they are capable, competent, qualified, and willing...especially if they bring a different perspective.

Overall, the best person for the job is the best-qualified person...male or female. The ultimate solution lies in the hands of leadership both at the upper and lower levels. Only if commanders hold leaders responsible for their actions will service members adhere to the standards.

Introduction

*Heat Of Battle You cannot choose your battlefield,
God does that for you;
But you can plant a standard
Where a standard never flew.*

— Stephen Crane, "The Colors"

Women in the military have come a long way. They started participating in the military by disguising themselves as men. Today women no longer have to conceal their gender. Women are succeeding in their roles and looking for more. While the laws for some specialties changed, close combat positions remain closed to women in all services. Only time will tell if the United States will keep tracking with its European allies and remove the barriers to combat exclusion or follow other successful examples in the integration of women into combat positions.

This paper will illustrate some of the arguments politicians, military members, and civilians have with allowing women into the combat arena. Some women cannot meet the minimum physical requirements for combat, but some men cannot as well. Others may say there are other physical issues that present roadblocks for women in combat, such as menstruation and pregnancy. However, this paper will demonstrate that these are not issues.

Men may experience difficulties coping with women in the battlefield. Whether it is an issue with unit cohesion or sexual thoughts, critics say that it is really the men that need to learn to cope. Many say women enhance readiness while others disagree. If the military does not allow women to join men in combat units, is the United States violating their right to serve? Should all United States citizens have an equal opportunity to serve in all positions at all ranks if they are capable, competent, qualified, and willing? This is especially true if they can aid in the

fight by bringing a different perspective. Overall, the best person for the job is the best-qualified person...male or female.

War and Combat

The small bloody hole in the ground was crowded with men...All men lay watching bullets kick the dirt at the edge of the hole.

—LTG Harold G. Moore, USA (Ret.)¹

“According to the National Military Strategy of the United States, ‘The primary purpose of US armed forces is to deter threats of organized violence against the United States and its interests, and to defeat such threats should deterrence fail. . . . The armed forces' core competence is the ability to apply decisive military power to deter or defeat aggression and achieve our national security objectives.’”² The specific objectives are to "promote peace and stability and, when necessary, to defeat adversaries.”³ In order to defeat those adversaries and protect United States interests, sometimes the military engages in combat or war.

People often look at combat as a smaller subset of war. Veterans Affairs General Counsel in veterans’ hearings requires that a veteran have "personally participated in events constituting an actual fight or encounter with a military foe or hostile unit or instrumentality” to consider them to have "engaged in combat with the enemy.”⁴ Combat simply defined is “to oppose in battle; fight against.”⁵ However, there are many versions of combat within the armed services. In 1988, the Secretary of Defense drafted the Risk Rule in an attempt to standardize positions closed to women across the services. “Non-combat units can be closed to women on the grounds of risks or exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture provided the type,

degree, and duration of such risks are equal to or greater than that experienced by combat units in the same theatre of operations.”⁶

According to the Committee on Military Affairs and Justice of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, the terminology pertinent to the definition of combat is “combat mission,” “close combat,” “direct combat,” “combat support,” and “combat service support.” “Combat mission” was a term used to establish combat exclusion. “Close combat” is “engaging an enemy with individual or crew-served weapons while being exposed to direct enemy fire, a high probability of direct physical contact with the enemy’s personnel, or a substantial risk of capture.” There are no women in “close combat.”⁷ “Direct combat” is an Army term that expanded the DOD’s close combat definition by adding “engaging an enemy with individual or crew-served weapons while being exposed to direct enemy fire, a high possibility of direct physical contact with the enemy...and a substantial risk of capture...[and] takes place while closing with the enemy with fire, maneuver, or shock effect.” Women may not serve in positions coded as P1, designating the highest probability of direct combat.⁸ The Marine Corps defined “direct combat operations” as “seeking out, reconnoitering, or engaging in offensive action.”⁹ “Combat support” is providing “operational assistance to combat troops.” “Combat service support” provides “logistical, technical, and administrative services to the combat.” Women in all services serve in combat support or combat service support units.¹⁰

The definition of war is “a state of open, armed, often prolonged conflict carried on between nations, states, or parties.”¹¹ The root of the word ‘war’, werra, is Frankish-German, meaning confusion or strife. Clausewitz describes the “fog of war” further emphasizing the confusion war produces.¹² Since confusion erupts from war, military professionals must prepare for that “fog of war.”

Especially during combat situations, military professionals must maintain ethics. However, they must continue to abide by these standards whether in or out of combat conditions. Hartle sums the “traditional ethic” of the United States military profession into a set of seven principles. Military professionals need to remember and uphold these ethical principles to preserve good order and discipline both in and out of conflict. Military professionals:

1. Accept service to country...[and] subordinate their personal interests
2. Conduct themselves at all times as persons of honor whose integrity, loyalty, and courage are exemplary
3. Develop and maintain the highest possible level of professional knowledge and skill
4. Take full responsibility for their actions and orders
5. Promote and safeguard...the welfare of their subordinates
6. Conform strictly to the principle that subordinates the military to civilian authority
7. Adhere to the laws of war and the regulations of their service in performing their professional functions¹³

Policy and Statistics

There are currently over 200,000 women serving on active duty in the armed forces and more than 150,000 in the National Guard and Reserve. Women comprise 17 percent of the total force. Broken down, that is equivalent to 20% Air Force, 15% Army, 19% Navy, 6% Marines, and 24% Reserve.¹⁴ This is a phenomenal increase since 1970 when only 1.4 percent of the total military was comprised of women. That number more than tripled to 4.6 percent in 1975, nearly doubled to 8.3 percent in 1980, increased to 10 percent in 1985, 11 percent in 1990, and to 13 percent in 1994.¹⁵ Figure 1 below shows how the number of women in the military has grown over the past 60 years.¹⁶

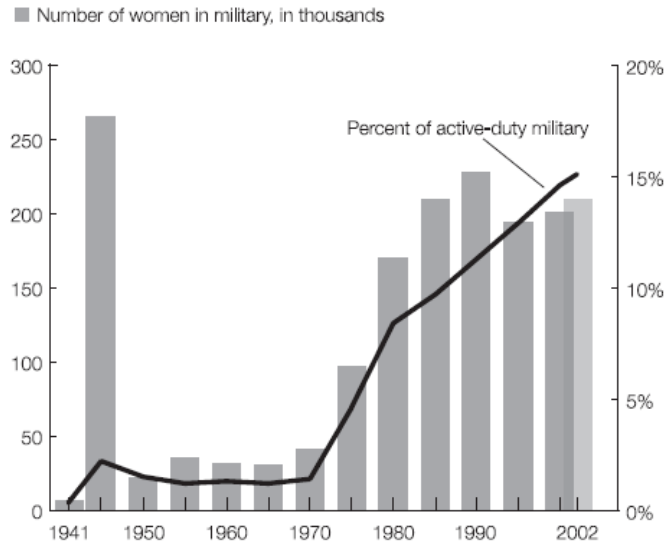


Figure 1: Women in the Military

Current federal laws try to protect women from “direct” or “close combat.” This does not mean women will not see combat; it is merely there to limit the amount of close and direct engagement in which they will be exposed to enemy forces. However, this law prevents women from serving in 20 percent of active duty positions.¹⁷ Currently, the military excludes women from serving in:

1. infantry
2. tank, some artillery (explained below), and armored vehicle units
3. coastal patrol boats and submarines
4. special operations units such as Army Rangers and Navy SEALs¹⁸

As shown in Figure 2, about 80 percent of the positions are available to women and more than 90 percent of the career fields.¹⁹ While this seems like a large amount of opportunities that have grown over the years, this could increase to allow more women to gain more experience. Additionally, the opportunity varies depending on the service. All Coast Guard positions and occupations are open to women²⁰ so they are not in Figure 2.

Selected Years, 1971-2003								
Year	Positions				Occupations			
	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
2003	70	91	62	99	91	94	92	99
1994	65	62	34	100	—	—	—	—
1983	52	40	21	90	90	86	96	98
1980*	—	—	—	—	95	86	96	98
1971*	—	—	—	—	39	24	57	51

Figure 2: Percent Military Positions and Occupations Open to Women

****NOTE:** — Less than 0.5 percent.

* Enlisted only.

Occupations refer to specific military job categories (for example infantry rifleman or tank driver), while positions refer to the people actually employed in these occupations.²¹

With over 99 percent, the Air Force has the highest percentage of positions available to women. This percentage allows women to fly combat aircraft, a coveted and career-enhancing assignment.²² What it does not offer women is the opportunity to serve in Combat Control, Special Operations Forces, Rotary Aircraft, Tactical Air Control Pararescue, and Weather assignments with infantry or Special Forces.²³

The largest increase in both positions and career fields open to women has come from the Navy. Today women can serve in 91 percent of the Navy billets. “Furthermore, like the Air Force, women in the Navy...can fly combat aircraft and serve on combat ships”²⁴ and even command them. Yet women “remain excluded from submarine duty and small vessels, largely because of living arrangement restrictions,”²⁵ and from units such as the Navy SEALs that engage in direct ground combat. The Navy expects their women to pull sea duty routinely now.²⁶

The Marine Corps substantially increased their openings by almost tripling their percent of positions open to women. However, they offer a smaller fraction of positions to women than the other services. Large amounts of positions in direct ground combat units currently prevent women from participation. The Marine Corps assignments closed to women are “infantry

regiments and below, artillery battalions and below, all armored units, combat engineer battalions, reconnaissance units, riverine assault craft units, low altitude air defense units, and fleet anti-terrorism security teams.”²⁷

As in the Marines, the Army’s direct ground combat exclusion for women has a tremendous affect on the total number of positions they allow women to enter. Additionally, women may not fulfill positions that are “doctrinally required to collocate and remain with direct combat units.”²⁸ Some of the positions prohibited for women to serve in include infantry, armor, Special Forces, combat engineer companies, and ground surveillance radar platoons.²⁹ At one point, the Army cracked the door to allow women into artillery positions. This occurred in anticipation of the Lance Missile System. However, these designated artillery positions are now for men. New accessions will not enter into artillery positions. Although, women can be in support roles for artillery and at higher headquarter levels. Nonetheless, those that are already in the specialty are staying or “grandfathered” with the knowledge that there is a glass ceiling on the specialty. There is a limit to how far women can progress in artillery, especially since they are no longer going to be in the field. Each air defense system is independent. The Patriot Missile System allows women to serve at all echelons, while women must be above the battalion level for the SHORt Range Air Defense systems (SHORAD).

Basically, women may not serve in units of battalion size or smaller whose primary mission is ground combat, or with units that are routinely located with combat units.³⁰ Although, the Army authorizes women to serve above brigade level or at the headquarters in many specialties. Without the experience from the lower level, the likelihood of advancement is very slim.

The History of Women in Combat

Women have always been involved in wars. If current laws did not allow women in uniform or combat, they even disguised themselves to defend their cause. It is indeterminable exactly how many went unrecorded and undiscovered. However, some went for long periods of time and were very successful without being exposed.

Discussions on the involvement of women in the military date back to the works of the ancient Greek philosophers. In the Fourth century B.C., Plato thought women should fulfill their share of civic responsibilities, and these responsibilities included fighting in war. Additionally, Aristotle believed that the concept of “citizenship” included “carrying arms on behalf of the political community.”³¹ Both Plato and Aristotle agreed that part of citizenship was securing the community, and all citizens should take part in it.

To begin examples of women in combat, Joan of Arc must be included. At just 17 years old, she began wearing men’s clothes to work her way into the French army and successfully lead them into battle against the English.³²

Women officially participated in the American Revolution by cooking, sewing, and doing laundry. There are also stories of women that illustrated women’s enthusiasm to fight. One in particular was Mary Hayes. Some called her Molly Pitcher because she brought water to her troops. One day she put down her water pitcher and fought alongside the men. She took over a gun station when the men in it were seriously injured, and she continued fighting.³³

During the War of 1812, one woman stands out, Lucy Brewer. She disguised herself as a male marine and fought on Old Ironsides as George Baker. “It would be over one hundred years before the Marine Corps seriously began to recruit women - August 1918 - to be specific.”³⁴

There were an estimated 400 women during the Civil War that disguised themselves and fought as men.³⁵ They also served as spies, scouts, and nurses. One woman served without pay as a physician, acted as a spy, and was a prisoner of war.³⁶

Between 33,000 and 49,500 women participated in World War I.³⁷ While most of them had enlisted in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps between 1901 and 1908, some were in the Coast Guard and the Marine Corps as well.³⁸

Around 350,000 Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC)s, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVE)s, and nurses were active in the service during World War II.³⁹ The purpose of these units was to fill manpower shortages.⁴⁰ However, they never carried rifles.⁴¹ Additionally, by virtue of the WAACs and the WAVES being auxiliary corps, there was no hint of full military status for women.⁴²

After World War II, the military discharged most of the women. "The war was over and there was no place for women in the military in the minds and hearts of many. The buzzword was demobilization."⁴³ In 1948, President Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act to limit the percent of women in the military to two percent.⁴⁴ While this authorized women permanent status in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and (newly created) Air Force, it also established boundaries under the Combat Exclusion Law (CEL). These boundaries were that "women may be assigned to all units except those with a high probability of engaging in ground combat, direct exposure to enemy fire, or direct physical contact with the enemy."⁴⁵

In the Korean War, over 120,000 women were on active duty as shown in Figure 3. They served as nurses and in support units in Japan and other far eastern countries.⁴⁶

<u>Military Conflict</u>	<u>Number of Women Who Served</u>
War of 1812 and earlier	unknown
Civil War	est. 400 unofficially
World War I	33,000 – 49,500
World War II	350,000
Korea	120,000
Vietnam	7,500 – 10,000
Desert Storm	40,000
Somalia	1,000
Haiti	1,200
Bosnia	5,000

Figure 3: Number of Women Who Served in Military Conflicts

Sources say between 7,500 and 10,000 women were in the Vietnam War.⁴⁷ There were over 500 WAACs; over 600 Air Force women; over 6,000 Army, Navy, and Air Force nurses and Medical Specialists; and an unnumbered amount of Women Marines, Red Cross members, Special Services, Civil Service members, etc.⁴⁸ Seven women died in the line of duty during this war.⁴⁹

Women's rights made great strides in the military immediately following the Vietnam War. In 1973, President Nixon ended the conscription and began the All-Volunteer Force. They also waived the two percent stipulation for women.⁵⁰ The male service academies admitted women in 1975.⁵¹

Women played a key role in the success of the Persian Gulf War. This war involved some 40,000 women, representing seven percent of the total deployed forces⁵² and 17 percent of the Reserve and National Guard. It was the largest female deployment in United States history.⁵³

Women served as aircraft pilots, logistical support, in supply units, repair units, and on hospital ships.⁵⁴ Sixteen women died during the Persian Gulf War, and two were Prisoners of War (POWs).⁵⁵

Adhering to the CEL allowed women to serve in logistics bases forward of all-male infantry and armor units, but not on aircraft carriers hundreds of miles to the rear of the front lines. As America watched the war on their televisions, they saw that CELs did not protect women from becoming POWs or “coming home in body bags.”⁵⁶ After the Gulf War, women’s opportunities expanded even further. They then had the chance to serve in combat planes and on combat ships.⁵⁷

Women have been fulfilling their ever-increasing role in the military. Between 1992 and 1994, over 1,000 women were in Somalia. Over 1,200 women deployed to Haiti for peacekeeping in 1995. Bosnia saw over 5,000 women in peacekeeping operations.⁵⁸ Now, five servicewomen died so far in Afghanistan.⁵⁹

As previously mentioned, opportunities for women in the military are expanding everyday. Women are in all specialties except the infantry, tank units, some artillery and armored vehicle units, coastal patrol boats and submarines, and special operations units. Of the 2247 military members that died so far in Operation Iraqi Freedom, 48 have been women.⁶⁰ They are continuing to prove that in combat support and combat service support units, women can still be fatalities.

Other Countries Setting the Example

Other countries have already incorporated women into all aspects of their military. Some countries add women to combat out of necessity or threat to national survival as the Soviet Union, Germany, and Israel did in the past. Then after the crisis, the countries excluded women from combat in their policies. However, some of those countries as well as others started reevaluating women’s role in combat. Since 1990, Canada, Denmark, and the Netherlands have

used women in combat positions. Additionally, Greece had women fight alongside men.⁶¹ European allies are opening their combat units to women; is it time to do the same for the United States?

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia began admitting women into its armed forces again. In 1992, women accounted for 2 percent of Russian troops. They now total 15 percent. The men widely accept and even credit them with helping rebuild the broken post-Soviet Union morale. They say that the women have “higher morale than their male peers, and most commanders see them as better, more responsible soldiers, more adherent to military regulations and less prone to Russia's chronic alcoholism.”⁶²

Germany's incorporation of women into their armed forces has been slower. The German military was an all-male institution since 1956. They accepted women physicians in 1975, but they had no military training. In 2000, European courts ruled that women could work in all military specialties. “Late in 2004, Germany's parliament extended the nation's equal opportunity laws to the armed services, meaning women could not be denied entry into a particular military career field based solely on their gender. But the services are still trying to figure out how to implement this latest development.”⁶³ Germany currently is using a quota system in which women get preference for assignments until they reach 15 percent of the total force. Women compose about 5 percent of the German armed services.⁶⁴

Researchers state mixed-gender units tend to perform better than single-gender units do. Two examples of mixed-gender units in foreign militaries that performed more effectively than single-gender ones were in North Vietnam and El Salvador. “American commanders of experienced mixed-gender units noticed a similar pattern of positive dynamics - the women worked harder to gain approval, and the men worked harder not to be outdone.”⁶⁵

Canada allows women to serve in every position in their military. In 1999, a court order opened all Canadian military specialties to women except submarine services. All positions opened in 2002. Ship commanders surveyed over a decade ago were skeptical about women boarding their ships. However, later surveys reveal a widespread reversal of opinion. Top officers even feel women create better conditions for all, including "fewer fights" and "fewer 'macho' incidents" with women aboard.⁶⁶

These are just a few examples of other countries removing the constraints on women in their services. While this is a small number of countries, most are similar in culture. The trend is starting. Although Canada's military serves as more of a peace corps than the United States military, they do have combat forces, and their incorporation of women throughout their services show that it can work. With examples of the successful integration of women into all units of the military, it opens the door for the United States to follow.

Pros and Cons

In war, there are no unwounded soldiers.

—José Narosky

There are many different arguments supporting and opposing women into combat units. Critics view ideas differently depending on which party they favor. Of course, there are physical differences between women and men. However, is the question really about the differences or about the individual characteristics each person needs to possess in order to go into combat? Do women pose a burden on unit cohesion because of those physical differences? On the other hand, does it really come down to a sexual issue? Does excluding women from combat positions

violate their equal rights? After all, women can bring a different perspective and possibly advantage to the fight.

Physical Differences

Men that have been in combat units explain that women should not join them because of three factors. They say women supposedly lack “speed, strength, and stamina”; can have “babies, menstrual periods, and breast milk;” or they in theory need “more showers, different facilities, and privacy.”⁶⁷ Most women may not like to get as dirty as men do; however, biologically speaking, there is no reason why women have to bathe more often than men.⁶⁸

Strength and Endurance

Men see women as the weaker sex. They even use feminine terms to insult each other. Body composition does favor men in “size, muscle mass, bone mass, fat distribution, structure of elbow joints, and pelvis.” This all makes it easier for them to gain “strength, explosive power, speed and throwing / jumping abilities.” Additionally, cardio respiratory differences aid men; “size of heart and lungs, oxygen content, oxygen uptake, average hemoglobin content, body temperature and sweat-gland functions, all give men an advantage in physical endurance and heat tolerance.”⁶⁹

According to Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, “the average woman is shorter and lighter than a man and has more body fat but possesses only 55 percent to 72 percent of the average male recruit's body strength.” She believes that those differences could endanger men and women combat soldiers during battle.⁷⁰ There are also claims that the average woman is “weaker, better coordinated, and shorter than the average man.” However, some

women are “stronger, more clumsy, and taller than some men. Character traits that distinguish great warriors are not gender determined.”⁷¹ Not all men outrun or out-lift all women.

Being in the military definitely can be physically demanding depending on the position the individual is filling. Many question whether women can handle the gravitational forces of combat aviation; however, there is no evidence that says they cannot.⁷² Some women and even some men are too weak to lift heavy weapons and wounded comrades. Some positions no longer require as much physical strength as others. Modern technology has “leveled the playing field”⁷³ enough that anyone can push a button, yielding gender-neutral specialties.

The question is not necessarily how strong the average woman is or needs to be. The real question should be how strong any person needs to be to fulfill the requirements for specific positions. However, if services enforced certain physical standards for individual occupations depending on the requirements, the gender factor would disappear. In fact, it could ensure that the men that were incapable of physically handling certain jobs were not putting their fellow combatants at risk in battle. “It is interesting to note that everyone, including women, believe the physical standards for military occupational specialties (MOS) should be identical for both men and women.”⁷⁴

Menstruation

Women experience menstruation once a month; however, this does not prevent them from completing their job requirements while in garrison or deployed. Menstruation can be anything from an inconvenience for some, to a great deal of pain for others. Nevertheless, in the middle of battle no woman is going to tell the armored division or the submarine to pull over because she has cramps. She is going to grin and bear it maybe with the aid of a few mild painkillers.

Another obstacle during menstruation is the monthly bleeding. “Military nurses have endured unsanitary conditions without a reduction in their ability to perform their duties in wartime.”⁷⁵ Most women just need to change their feminine product every six to eight hours. Occasionally, women may want to use a wipe. On the other hand, even an uncircumcised man must keep himself clean or risk infection.⁷⁶ The military does not remove men from battle for this.

While this is not necessarily a problem, there are alternatives to monthly menstrual cycles if a woman decides to pursue them. One choice the woman could elect would be to eliminate the menstrual cycle altogether through modern medicine. Depo-Provera, also known as Depo, is a birth control shot that in many cases prevents menstruation.⁷⁷ In addition, a 365-day pill, Anya, has just hit the market. Anya, is a birth control pill that actually suppresses the menstrual period for a full year.⁷⁸

Pregnancy

Pregnancies worry some experts. They believe that pregnancies may hurt readiness. Women all react differently to pregnancy. There are many jobs that women can do while pregnant, however, women should not be on the battlefield while pregnant. Fortunately, the average woman is pregnant for a very small fraction of her life. Moreover, some women never become pregnant. Statistics show it has little bearing on military readiness.

Many challenge the thought of women in combat because women may use pregnancy as a means of avoiding combat duty if called to deploy. When some women do not intend to become mothers ever, other women already have as many children as they want, and still other women are not ready to bring children into the world, it would be wrong to exclude all women from combat positions based on this premise. In fact, some women have sued to stay on active duty as

pregnant single soldiers, in spite of the heavy burden of pregnancy. Similarly, some have sued for discharge from active duty when they preferred “motherhood to heavy combat assignments.”⁷⁹

Many are concerned that women captured and sexually assaulted may become pregnant. Conversely, pregnancies are unlikely for POWs. “Because of the stress and poor diet generally associated with the POW environment, most if not all of the women would experience amenorrhea and be incapable of pregnancy.”⁸⁰ Therefore, this should not present a problem.

Cohesion

When people mention the subject of women in combat, cohesion usually follows. Researchers have been dividing cohesion into two types: social and task. They hope this will emphasize the fact that everyone does not need to “like one another or be alike” to accomplish a common objective.⁸¹ Service members do not need to socially bond to complete their mission successfully. Of course, it would help. However, until women are totally accepted, this may not occur.

Many contend that men would not be able to trust women to accomplish combat physical demands, which could lead to serious problems. To maintain cohesion, experts agree on equal treatment for both men and women military members. Every member must feel as though he or she is a crucial part of the unit, not separated by gender. An established and enforced standard will achieve this.⁸² “Military units of mixed sexes have quietly maintained order, accomplished missions, and passed operational readiness inspections with flying colors. They're too busy doing their jobs to worry about who uses which latrine...mixed units perform as cohesive and effective teams even under fire.”⁸³ For the United States, these have recently been combat support units, ships, and aircrews with women or when women in other than direct combat units

come under fire. However, there is no evidence to show that this same unit cohesion and team effectiveness could not also be in direct combat units. After all, astronauts work in close quarters and have for many years. They have been performing as a "cohesive unit" on space flights without any problems.⁸⁴

Protection Factor

Since most men view women as the weaker sex, they in turn believe they need to be protected. In fact, protection is part of the reason some men fight. When women are able to perform the traditional roles and jobs and perform them successfully, it challenges some men's masculinity. Most "men fear the loss of masculinity much more than women fear the loss of femininity because masculinity, unlike femininity, has to be earned by achievement and can be lost by failure to achieve."⁸⁵ Women would no longer be the weaker sex in need of protection, but they would be equals. In reality, they are not only equals; but they are the male's competition.

Competitive, equal women in combat roles would truly infringe on this traditionally male specialty. A characteristic in most men causes men to want to be the protector of women, consequently, making women the protected."⁸⁶ Therefore, the problem is not necessarily with the women, but with the men. If women can be in combat and perform well, then it must not be so hard. Masculinity is no longer a requirement. Women no longer need protection.

Some men may even become overly protective in combat or when captured. They may defend their women counterparts more than they may defend the men. Additionally, women being present may influence the judgment of male POWs. This may cause them to make certain decisions and take certain actions they normally would not. Some people fear the enemy will use women against the men by acts of torture and threats against them to "crack" the men.⁸⁷

However, as men start to see women more of their equals without the need of their protection, this should not be a problem. Men will start to see that women can protect themselves and are equivalent to the other men within the unit. Additionally, through proper training this affect should be minimal.

Sexual Issues

Love, Lust, and Jealousy

Sexual issues may take the focus of men in combat away from their primary duties. These may range anywhere from fighting for the attention of a women in theater, being annoyed by someone else that is pursuing a female compatriot, to actual love affairs. No matter which issues arise, it is up to the commanding officer to put a stop to the hindering actions immediately.

When women interrupt “male-bonding” or cohesion, men may openly reject women's presence because they are unable to relate to them or even begin to compete with each other for women's attention. The presence of women inhibits male bonding, corrupts allegiance to the hierarchy, and diminishes the desire of men to compete for anything but the attention of women.⁸⁸

“Heterosexual men like women in ways they don't like other men. In fact, a graphic fascination with women may be the only thing all heterosexual men share, which is one reason females are talked about the way they sometimes are. Make those women real, though, and what had been benign posturing turns into serious competition.”⁸⁹ According to Kayla Williams, women even start to feel special as if they are “queen for a year.” She goes on to describe women’s appearances while deployed or in combat on average get “three extra points on a ten-

point scale.”⁹⁰ This is partly due to the fact that men no longer concentrate on the mission; they are more concerned with sexual attraction and potential sexual favors. This significantly detracts from the unit effectiveness.

Love affairs and sexual relations would be the extreme. “There can be no exclusive relationships” in order to prevent envy, frustration, impatience, inequity, and disgust. “Love rearranges loyalties.”⁹¹ Imagine the tension if one man’s lover had to share a foxhole with another man that had been flirting with her or trying to win her affection. Suspicions and jealousies would appear at that point. Some men cannot even trust themselves as demonstrated by Anna Simons below.

Talk to any soldier who has spent time in a hide site, in a snow cave, or on lonely, boring guard duty. Does he really think it would be possible to lie there, shaking and shivering, waiting in the dark, with a female soldier right beside him, and not have that make some sort of difference? Even if no emotional connection is made, will everyone else realize that? Potential alone is corrosive. Conjecture breeds doubt, doubt suspicion, suspicion mistrust. And mistrust is infectious. It might even be endemic. What men can't say too loudly is that, when it comes down to it, they know they can't always trust themselves.⁹²

Unfortunately, this fear alone is enough for some to decide to keep women out combat. More training will be required in order for men and women to become more comfortable working with each other and move past sexual tendencies. Additionally, individuals that violate rules should be responsible for their actions. In training conditions, there is a greater chance for relationships, suspicions, and inappropriate behavior. Leadership will be the key to making sure that the training and combat situations run smoothly.

Prisoners of War and Assault Issues

People argue that it is too dangerous to put women in combat due to the possibility of them being POWs. If taken as a POW, it is likely that women will encounter acts of sexual molestation or rape. However, many say that these women are adults and they know the risks

involved with combat just as person who joins the military knows before they sign the dotted line. There are also opinions that women soldiers would psychologically be unable to handle the sexual abuse. However, there is “no factual basis for the conclusion that women would be weaker and more vulnerable to ‘crack’ than men would.” Before African-American soldiers began to incorporate into combat units, people assumed the same about them.⁹³

It seems as though there is much concern about the rape and abuse of women POWs in captivity. Conversely, it appears that there is little worry about male POWs suffering the same abuse. In 1992, the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the services requested information with experts who studied the experiences of former POWs in all of our wars. The answer reveals, “male POWs were subjected to many forms of incredibly brutal torture techniques, but sexual abuse was not one of them. Women, on the other hand, are almost always subjected to sexual abuse of varying degrees.”⁹⁴ Are men really not subjected to sexual torture as POWs? Or are they just more private, not revealing that information?

While sexual assault in captivity may be enough for some to decide automatically that women should not be in combat positions, the chances of this evil may occur anywhere. To prohibit women from participating in combat and gaining the professional experiences that they benefit would be a crime in itself. It is impossible to protect women at all times. The Elizabeth Smart case makes chillingly clear that women and girls are not safe even while they are sleeping in their own homes. If the raped women cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy had not decided to attend a military academy, they may not have been raped.⁹⁵ However, if they had to do it all over again, most all of them would attend the Academy again.

Readiness

Enthusiasts sit on both sides of the fence when it comes to the issue of readiness and women in combat. Some argue that women enhance military readiness due to there being a larger pool of candidates. Then challengers insist that due to politics, “quotas would be undeniable, thus allowing unqualified women into key military positions.”⁹⁶ Senior leaders would have to ensure military members meet all of the standards and that unrealistic quotas do not add a strain to promote unqualified individuals.

In a 1998 GAO survey, men believed that they were more physically prepared and willing to deploy than women. Over half the men suggested that women either affect readiness “no differently than men” or positively. (See Figure 4.)⁹⁷ Both men and women thought their units

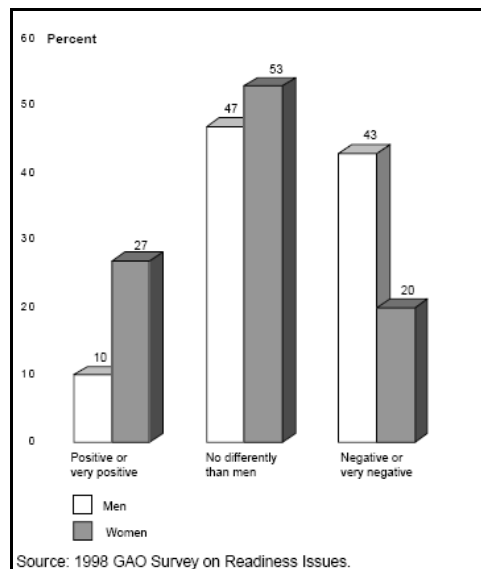


Figure 4: Perceived Impact of Women on Unit Readiness

were ready to perform their wartime missions. 86 percent of the men and 80 percent of the women surveyed were moderately or very confident their units could perform their wartime missions effectively.⁹⁸ The majority of women believed that men and women perform wartime tasks equally. However, the men split over their thoughts. “Although men tended to view the

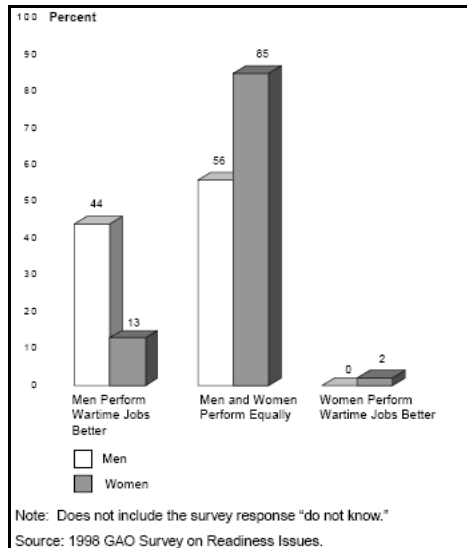


Figure 5: Perceptions of Relative Ability to Perform Wartime Jobs

impact of women on unit readiness less positively than women, more than half the men indicated that women affect readiness either no differently from men or in a positive way.”⁹⁹ In general,

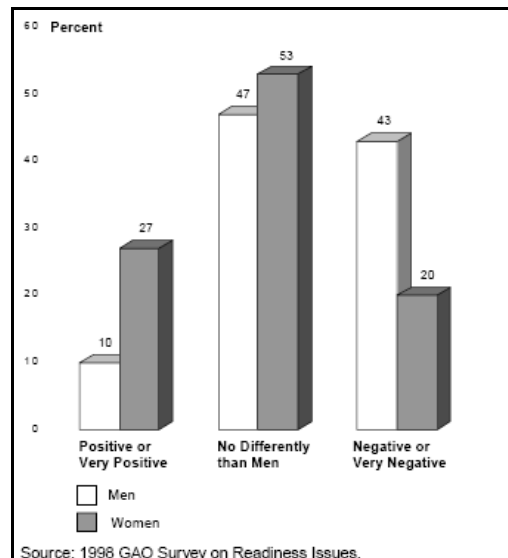


Figure 6: Perceived Impact of Women on Unit Readiness

the perceived effect on unit readiness that women bring to the unit does not appear to have a dramatic impact.

Equal Opportunity

Equal rights are what the United States fights for; however excluding women from combat is going against the principles for which the country stands. Therefore, using United States standards, is it unethical to allow some capable, competent, qualified, and willing to serve in all specialties the right and not others. An equal opportunity to serve is every citizen's right, as well as an equal chance for promotion.

Combat exclusion laws prevent women from obtaining the experience they need for more advanced senior level positions. A study performed by the General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1989 determined that "people serving in combat specialty career fields are generally promoted more rapidly than people in non-combat specialties, and are generally promoted to higher levels." The Supreme Court even recognized that "combat restrictions have a disproportionate impact on women by limiting their opportunities for promotion."¹⁰⁰ Combat experience would truly make women well rounded and more qualified for promotion to higher grades, both in and out of the service.

Feminine Nature

If it's natural to kill, why do men have to go into training to learn how?

—Joan Baez

The ethic of care assumes that women by nature are different from men. It focuses on the premise that women are more oriented towards peace, caring, compassion, and non-violence; consequently, they should not kill. They should "preserve life."¹⁰¹ These same theorists believe this comes from women's experiences of giving birth and nurturing human life.¹⁰² Marine Corps Commandant General Robert Barrows (Ret.) testified in congressional hearings that "[c]ombat is

uncivilized and women cannot do it...I think the very nature of women disqualifies them from doing it. Women give life, sustain life, nurture life, they do not take it.”¹⁰³ As he stereotypes women, it actually frightens him to think of women outside of the roles he views are appropriate for them and into combat roles. Senior leaders with these thoughts are the ones that consider combat inappropriate for the nation’s child bearers and provide obstacles to women in their struggle to join men in combat roles.

Other individuals argue that women just cannot kill. As Captain Barbara A. Wilson, USAF (Ret) states in the following quote, killing really is not a gender issue.

My honest opinion is that it is not necessarily a male-female thing even though society portrays it that way. I have known some pretty weak men who wouldn't protect the back of their own mother in a crisis or combat situation and some strong women who would go to the wall for a total stranger in the trenches - and vice versa. Many women are excellent shots with pistol, carbine and automatic weapons, many men can't hit a cow with a target painted on it. Women pilots can handle some jet fighters better than men and male pilots can handle heavy bombers slightly better -and women can "pull G's" better than men. But when it comes to the trenches, fox holes, covert operations, guerilla warfare, etc. I think it takes a particular personality type - almost on the edge of a pathological one - to even want to become a trained killer. This can have appeal for both men and women, but hopefully very few of either sex.¹⁰⁴

If the question really was whether or not women could kill someone face to face, you could just look at the number of women on death row to see that this is not beyond the scope. When you add a cause to the killings, women have proven themselves repeatedly. When faced with combat, women have successfully performed in past experiences.

There is also the question of whether women would be aggressive enough. According to some experts, women would make aggressive soldiers. “They have grown up with little sense of the ritual nature of war; they would fight ruthlessly and without scruple, fighting like the underdog, paying scant attention to the chivalric rules.” Additionally, women have been proving

themselves by performing “on par with their male peers in difficult circumstances and under severe psychological pressure.”¹⁰⁵

Instead of the female lack of aggressiveness being the problem, the problem may lie in the presence of women influencing male aggressiveness. Men’s aggressiveness may be “softened” if women accompany them into battle.¹⁰⁶

A Woman’s Perspective

Women bring a different viewpoint to situations than their men counterparts. Both men and women have different skills that when matched together may benefit them both. “The possibilities for mutual help and encouragement could be greater”¹⁰⁷ as a result of integrated combat units. Women also could talk to host nation women. They may interrogate or search women POWs. Sometimes women may not open up to men, however, a female may know just what buttons to push to make the female POW “crack.”

J. R. R. Tolkien alluded to the necessity of women in combat in his well-known book *The Lord of the Rings*. He used the character Eowyn in *The Return of the King* to represent these ideas. Eowyn was a strong woman that was willing to join the fight alongside her male counterparts. Forbidden to go into battle, she disguised herself as Dernhelm to ride with Rohirrim to join Gondor in war on the Pelennor Fields. The most powerful and deadly servant of Sauron, the king of the Ringwraiths, Lord of the Nazgul, attacks her uncle, King Theoden. She comes to his defense and the Lord of the Nazgul says that he cannot be killed by any living man. Eowyn replies with the famous quote, “But no living man am I! You look upon a woman.”¹⁰⁸ She accomplished what no man could, because she was no man; she was a woman. This can correlate to today’s combat situations, as well. Women can bring a lot to the table with different thoughts, emotions, influence, actions, and reactions.

The Best One for the Job

Some of the problems discussed throughout this paper could be resolved if leaders took it upon themselves to ensure mission success with women present. Men would continue to focus on the mission versus concentrating on winning the females. Men would not fight over the women. Readiness would not be an issue due to the unit and everyone in it always being prepared for anything. “Equal opportunity” would be a phrase of the past and no longer need. Everyone would have the same opportunity regardless of his or her gender.

One does not have a right to practice medicine; the privilege is conferred only on persons who are professionally qualified to practice.

— Marie E. deYoung¹⁰⁹

This quote sums the qualifications service members need to meet in order to be in any specialty. Certain combat occupations should have established criteria. Those members that are unable to meet the set requirements for the specialty should not work in that specialty regardless of their gender. Of course, if it is a standard for the job, the same minimums should be for men and women. This would correct the problem that is currently present in most combat units. Some of the men assigned to tank units cannot even load main gun rounds fast enough to meet combat standards.¹¹⁰ This will increase the overall effectiveness of the fighting force and ultimately the success in the missions. Participation based on individual ability without restrictions or special treatment increase the size of the pool from which to draw the best-qualified soldiers. “As Clausewitz noted, it reminds us that the support of all the people is fundamental to victory.”¹¹¹ Jobs should be open to men or women if they are qualified and capable.

There are two similar career fields currently demonstrating that teams of women and men can work together. They employ the right person for the job regardless of their gender; and it works. Both fire fighters and police officers face fear and danger together and work as a cohesive team to overcome their threats. Police Officers depend on each other as the military does in combat when they face armed assailants. Fire fighters must meet strict physical criteria in case they need to carry someone or a wounded fellow fire fighter out of a burning building.¹¹² These careers are close in risks. However, the fire fighters and police officers work on shifts. “War doesn’t occur in shifts.”¹¹³ The previous risk percentage is not comparable, as shown in Figure 7.

<i>World War I</i>	1917-1918	53,402		<i>Fire Fighters</i>	1980	138		<i>Police</i>	1980	207
<i>World War II</i>	1941-1946	291,557		<i>Fire Fighters</i>	1992	75		<i>Police</i>	1992	169
<i>Korean War</i>	1950-1953	33,741		<i>Fire Fighters</i>	1994	104		<i>Police</i>	1994	178
<i>Vietnam War</i>	1961-1973	47,415*		<i>Fire Fighters</i>	2002	97		<i>Police</i>	2002	159
<i>Persian Gulf War</i>	1991	147		<i>Fire Fighters</i>	2004	103		<i>Police</i>	2004	161
<i>Operation Iraqi Freedom</i>	2003-2004	857*								

Figure 7: Annual Killed in Action¹¹⁴

***NOTE:** There were almost 11,000 additional deaths in Vietnam due to nonhostile causes. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., has a higher total because it adds postwar deaths of soldiers wounded in action.

****NOTE:** Combat deaths as of Oct. 31, 2004; military operations are ongoing. This number does not include 259 nonhostile deaths.

Although, when you take into account the decreasing number of deaths per year in combat, it is becoming more comparable. With varying amounts of risks, they each still need cohesion to be an effective unit.

Conclusions

Women’s roles in military combat should continue to grow. Leaders at every level should embrace the policies and ensure service members follow them to the lowest level. This paper

has shown that strength and endurance are not factors when you hold everyone to the same standard. All other physical concerns are easily controlled. If men have a problem bringing women aboard, they are the ones that need help learning to deal with women.

The following quote hit the nail on the head:

The issue really is a question of leadership. I would like to see the leaders of our armed forces at every level embrace in their policies the view of democracy they espouse in their oaths of office. To respond to myth and prejudice as quickly and strenuously as they respond to disparaging comments about the F-22 or a new carrier battle group, however, our most senior leaders (and we) will have to get smarter about our history and our political philosophy.

— Lorry M. Fenner¹¹⁵

It is the responsibility of military commanders to “insure maximum efficiency, competency, capability, and safety of their troops.”¹¹⁶ The ultimate solution lies in the hands of leadership both at the upper and lower levels. Only if commanders hold leaders responsible for their actions will service members adhere to the standards. Likewise, they should hold their service men and women accountable. Whether it is with the current manner used in the military or in the further integration of women into combat roles, the leaders will be setting the example of how to handle these situations.

Many people believe that future wars will be less direct combat and more technological. If this is the case, it will be more likely that women will have a greater role in combat. A better, more effective force will be one that deploys the most skilled and competent troops into combat regardless of their gender. As women are more accepted into combat roles as team players, a more cohesive team with the right people in the right positions will ensure victory in future wars.

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